

## Message Text

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ORIGIN EB-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /004 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION OECD PARIS

S E C R E T STATE 061284

PASS ASSISTANT SECRETARY ENDERS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE SECDEF OSAF IL INFO COPENHAGEN  
THE HAGUE OSLO FROM BRUSSELS

MAR 17

QUOTE S E C R E T NOFORN BRUSSELS 02346

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL, BE

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT

REF BRUSSELS 2303

1. BELGIAN SOURCES CONFIRM THAT F-104 REPLACEMENT ISSUE WILL  
BE ON AGENDA FOR THE MARCH 18 BELGIAN-DUTCH BILATERAL TALKS.  
WE HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT F-104 REPLACEMENT IS BEING DISCUSSED  
AT AN INNER CABINET MEETING TOADY. AS THIS IS FIRST TIME THAT  
ISSUE HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY RAISED AT PRIME MINISTER'S LEVEL,  
WE DOUBT THAT BELGIAN DECISION WOULD BE MADE ON BASIS OF ONE  
RESTRICTED CABINET MEETING AND IN TIME FOR THE MEETING WITH  
THE DUTCH. ONE RELIABLE SOURCE ASSURED US THAT THE PURPOSE  
OF THE HAGUE MEETING IS LIMITED TO ENSURING THAT BELGIUM AND  
NETHERLANDS CHOOSE THE SAME AIRCRAFT. ANOTHER WELL-PLACED  
SOURCE TOLD US THAT BELGIUM WOULD REVIEW THE NEW FRENCH OFFER  
IN NEXT 15 DAYS.

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2. OUR SOURCES INDICATE THAT FRENCH HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED THEIR PRICE OFFER ON MIRAGE UNTIL IT IS "COMPARABLE" TO F-16 PRICE. FRENCH HAVE OFFERED PRICE IN NATIONAL CURRENCIES, TO ELIMINATE PROBLEM OF CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS, AND HAVE IMPROVED INFLATION GUARANTEE ALONG LINES DESCRIBED IN PARA 3 OF REFTEL.

3. BELGIANS REMAIN SUSCEPTIBLE TO FRENCH ARGUMENT THAT DASSAULT PROVIDES EUROPE WITH ITS ONLY POSSIBLE HOPE FOR A VIABLE EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY. THE KEY QUESTION FOR THE BELGIANS IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE FRENCH ARE REALLY PREPARED TO WORK WITH THE OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (INCLUDING GERMANY) TO BUILD A TRULY EUROPEAN AERONAUTICS INDUSTRY. FURTHERMORE, TINDEMANS, WHO IS SEARCHING FOR SOME WAY TO RELAUNCH THE MOVEMENT TOWARD EUROPEAN UNITY, MAY CONCLUDE THAT SELECTION OF MIRAGE COULD LAY BASIS FOR FORWARD MOVEMENT TOWARD EUROPEAN INTEGRATION.

4. EMBASSY HAS BEEN USING ARGUMENT THAT A VIABLE EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY IS MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP IF IT HAS THE BENEFIT OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IN F-16. EMBASSY ARGUMENT HAS APPEARED TO IMPRESS SEVERAL KEY BELGIANS. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT CREDIBILITY U.S. OFFER TO MAKE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE TO CONSORTIUM IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN INFLUENCING BELGIAN CHOICE OF LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER PLAN.

5. ON THE BASIS OF TODAY'S SOUNDINGS, WE BELIEVE THAT INFO IN PARAS 2 AND 3. OF REFTEL IS MORE AN INDICATION OF WHAT BELGIAN MOD VANDEN BOEYNANTS WOULD HIMSELF LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH DUTCH THAN A COORDINATED BELGIAN GOVERNMENT POSITION.  
FIRESTONE  
UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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